The Inscriptions of the Lan Na and Lan Xang Kingdoms: A New Approach to Cross-Border History[1]

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Introduction

Among the principal written sources that enable us to address the ancient past of the Tai-Lao kingdoms of Lan Na and Lan Xang are hundreds of stele inscriptions which provide first-hand information. Historians, however, have not yet made effective use of these documents, perhaps because they have had difficulty in grasping them as a whole and in their diversity. The inscriptions of Lan Na and Lan Xang come from an expansive and physically heterogeneous area that includes the entire north and northeast of Thailand, all of Laos, and some territories in Burma. The geographical dispersion of these sources and the lack of published documentation have severely limited their inclusion in historical research pertaining to the northern Tai *müang*. For the value of the inscriptions to be plainly appreciated, they must be studied as a comprehensive series. Up to the present, this has been difficult to accomplish on a large scale.

The search for the sources

Epigraphic studies in the northern Tai regions have made singular progress over the past 20 years. A decisive step was taken in 1997 with the publication by Hans Penth, Phanphen Khrüathai, and Silao Ketphrom of the *Corpus of Lan Na Inscriptions* (ประชุมจารึกล้านนา). To date, 15 volumes have been issued, the most recent in 2013.[2] This collection does not cover epigraphic sources of Lan Na comprehensively, and its continuation is uncertain since the demise of Hans Penth. However, it does regroup most inscriptions on steles from the golden age of the Lan Na kingdom; other inscriptions have been edited through a less-extensive critical process in various publications.[3] The first systematic research on inscriptions of the ancient Tai-Lao kingdom of Lan Xang dates back to the 1976 thesis by Pierre-Marie Gagneux on epigraphic sources conserved in Vientiane.[4] A decade later, Thawat Punnothok widened the geographical framework of this study by publishing an exhaustive compilation of Lao inscriptions of northeast Thailand.[5] Since 2003, investigations in all provinces of Laos by the Vientiane center of the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) have enabled a relatively accurate depiction of epigraphic heritage throughout the country, particularly with respect to spatial distribution and chronological order.[6]

General problems

No single synthetic study on the stone inscriptions of Lan Na and Lan Xang[7] exists, notwithstanding the statistical tables published by Hans Penth,[8] a catalog and glossary by Marek Buchmann,[9] and epigraphic data in works by Volker Grabowsky.[10] Certain basic questions, notably regarding modalities contributing to the formation and development of the corpora of inscriptions from Lan Na and Lan Xang, still need to be addressed.

The institutionalized practice of engraving texts in stone is not self-evident — and it is not common to all civilizations. Its apparition was spontaneous only in the most ancient of historical periods. Later, it was transmitted through a mimesis effect, borrowing from neighboring or preceding cultures. This important process must be studied, particularly in the kingdoms of Sukhothai and Lan Na, where the allogeneic culture, initially constituted of Tai elements originating in southern China, developed in the north of Thailand through contact with local substrata and strong influences from the east, south, and west.

The transmission of epigraphic practice from one culture to another brings modifications. The recipient terrain must, above all, be amenable to its development. The practice of engraving texts responds to precise needs and objectives when it becomes institutionalized as a tool of civil authority. If the conditions necessary for its diffusion are not brought together, it quickly becomes artificial and its disappearance is inevitable. The study of epigraphic sources is thus inseparable from that of the context in which they are produced. Inscriptions participate in the functioning of society. They provide real and conjunctural data, imperceptible through sole reliance on chronicles.

In the case of Lan Na and Lan Xang, a separate study of the two epigraphic corpora has already furnished a large amount of data illuminating structural aspects of the history of the two kingdoms, notably economic and social questions. A comparative analysis of these corpora, by highlighting the common and differential elements, will however allow us to refine the perception of certain phenomena by contextualizing them in a more complete system of references.

Data suited to comparisons within the framework of the study of the lapidary corpus of Lan Na and Lan Xang can be classified into two broad categories: the material nature of the inscriptions and the textual aspect. The material nature relates to the inscribed stele itself, that is to say, to the date of the preparation and engraving of the stone, the geographical origin of the document, and its physical appearance.

Time and space

To identify the age of an inscribed stele is above all to date its text. In certain cases, the date of the text could be significantly later than initial preparation of the support. This distinction is essential for understanding the context in which inscriptions were produced – Lan Na and Lan Xang indeed offering very different situations in this regard.

Currently, it is not possible to reconstruct with certainty the process that led to the apparition and diffusion of writing in Lan Na.[11] The situation is clearer in the case of Lan Xang, since the systems of notation were borrowed manifestly from Lan Na. This is certain for the Tham (Dhamma) script, a religious script derived from Mon writing in western regions and not from cultures along the banks of the Mekong. This is also obvious in the case of Lao civil writing, which has long carried the mark of the *Fak kham* script used in Northern Thailand.[12]

From a chronological perspective, on the basis of remains found, the first inscriptions of Lan Xang were almost a century later than those of Lan Na, which were drafted in the *Fak kham* script. Putting aside certain undated inscription fragments and the famous inscription of Wat Phra Yuen in Lamphun that relates more to the epigraphic corpus of Sukhothai, the oldest Tai inscriptions found in the upper north of present-day Thailand date from 1411 and are linked to an important personage governing in Phayao.[13] It is not until 50 years later that there was real development in the production of steles. In the case of Lan Xang — disregarding two short cave inscriptions at Luang Prabang with a script that seems to testify to contact with Sukhothai in the early 14th century[14] — the oldest dated inscription is on a small stele at Müang Sanakham, on the banks of the Mekong between Luang Prabang and Vientiane. It indicates the year 1510 and refers to King Sumphu, who reigned a few years earlier.

The use of the Tham script in Lan Na inscriptions most likely postdates that of *Fak kham* – the first example, found on the pedestal of a Buddha

image, being dated 1465 – even though it is already evidenced on an engraved gold plaque found in Sukhothai that indicates the year 1376. it hardly appears on steles written in Tai language before the 17th century but it then definitively replaces the *Fak kham* script. On occasion, before the conquest of Chiang Mai by the Burmese in 1558, it was used specifically to transcribe a short formula in Pāli placed as an introduction, as on a Chiang Saen stele inscribed in 1488. In Laos, the most ancient example of the Tham script dates from 1527 (Wat Sangkhalok, Luang Prabang); however, it is exceptional, when compared to ancient Lan Na inscriptions at the same time, in that it was used to write an entire text in the Tai language. This particularity is reproduced several times in the stone inscriptions of Lan Xang during the second half of the 16th century.

The important lag in time between inscriptions originating in the two different kingdoms is not surprising: stone engraving is only one of multiple practices that were borrowed from the *müang* of Northern Thailand and diffused along the length of the Mekong. Accompanying developments included expansion of a renewed form of Buddhism, as well as the royal ideology with which it was associated.[15]

Evidence reveals that the practice of engraving inscriptions on steles in Lan Na attained an exceptional level during the consecutive reigns of three sovereigns: Tilokarat (1442–1487), Yot Chiang Rai (1487–1495), and Phra Müang Kaeo (1495–1526). This 80-year period corresponds to the "Golden Age" of the kingdom. Interestingly, coinciding with the end of the reign of Phra Müang Kaeo, the beginning of the reign of Phothisarat in Lan Xang marks the start of almost 100 years during which practically all the steles inscribed in the kingdom were produced. Since this period is undeniably marked by profound transformations (it is probable that the arrival in 1558 of refugees from Lan Na strongly stimulated new activities), one would in any case hesitate to qualify it as a "Golden Age." This term could be applied more appropriately to the calmer period of the Suriyavongsa government. However, there is a paradox: this reign, which occupied a good portion of the 17th century

and ended with the disintegration of the kingdom into three rival regions, provides little epigraphic evidence. Moreover, no sources mention the sovereign, even by implication.[16]

In Lan Na, the number of inscriptions between the beginning of the 15th century to 1639 is few more than 120 on steles with confirmed dates, plus some 50 others that do not exhibit chronological indications, but bear characteristics indicating an ancient origin. It took another century before additional evidence appeared. For this same period in Lan Xang, there are around 80 stele inscriptions, roughly half the production of Lan Na.[17] This still large figure, however, is not sufficient to reflect the extent of the difference that exists between the epigraphic sources of the two kingdoms, as it masks the "qualitative" aspect, which is significantly lower in the case of Lan Xang. Many Lao inscriptions — at least half of the corpus — are characterized by brevity of content (texts rarely consist of more than a dozen lines) and, therefore, the poverty of information delivered.

In terms of distribution, the Lao inscriptions present a more striking contrast than those of northern Thailand because while the latter are distributed relatively equally over a vast territory, the former are for the most part (approximately 85%) concentrated in the Laotian province of Vientiane and in the Thai provinces of Nong Khai and Udon Thani, which have immediate proximity to the Lao capital. This limitation of the area of extension of inscriptions seems to have been constant, since the oldest examples of engraved steles, prior to the choice of Vientiane as a royal city, are practically all located in the region near Luang Prabang, the first capital of Lan Xang. The difference in this respect between this kingdom and that of the Lan Na may be quite revealing of the limits reached in each space by effective royal authority.

Accidents of history

At this stage, it is useful to question the extent to which the corpus is representative of the past contexts. Accidents of history are numerous. Our vision can be affected by the disappearance of a certain number of sources or, more simply, by the fact that an important part of them have not yet been discovered. Documentation certainly includes important gaps. It is equally certain that essential historical evidence has disappeared irrevocably. Based on comparisons between different local corpora and other types of sources, such as archaeological remains and chronicles, the balance of epigraphic sources at our disposition today is illogical and out of equilibrium — without doubt the consequence of serious disturbances.

The capitals of the two kingdoms are deeply implicated in this disequilibrium. It is curious how few Tai inscriptions have been found in Chiang Mai in comparison with the number discovered, for example, in Phayao, even though the capital accounted for a very large number of monuments and temples, including the most prestigious. What happened to the great inscriptions that commemorated the foundings and donations documented in an important religious chronicle dating from the beginning of the 16th century, the *Jīnakālamālī ?*[18] It is indeed not logical that steles have been found for small temples located in marginal territories, and that they did not exist for the large city temples proven important by chronicles and archaeological remains. We know that the production of inscriptions dropped suddenly in Lan Na from the middle of the 16th century. This fact is certainly related to the long installation at Chiang Mai of a local power controlled by the Burmese. It would be logical for them to have profoundly modified and weakened, if only by substituting their authority for that of the legitimate sovereign, the ancient civil and religious networks by which orders were transmitted in the kingdom – and of which the stele constituted reliable records, by the perenniality and fixity of their support. If the alteration of the administrative apparatus, from the middle of the sixteenth century

onwards, led to the disappearance in Lan Na of the practice of engraving in stone ordinances fixing the local relationship between civil and religious affairs, the earlier acts, on the other hand, remained physically in most of the territory, where they were in any case no longer of use. In Chiang Mai, it was in any case not difficult to eradicate documents that could constitute an embarrassment for the new power, because they maintained on the one hand the memory of an old legitimate authority and presented as such a danger – and on the other hand justified privileges that no longer had any reason to be.[19]

Many stele inscriptions also disappeared from Vientiane, even though the conditions leading to this were very different. Setting aside three inscriptions linked to That Luang, a monument already located on the margins of the city, none of the acts commemorating the foundations and donations relating to the great temples of the capital prior to the 19th century have been preserved in stone. Inscriptions of less important temples were however found outside the historical center of Vientiane. The Siamese troops sacked the city after recapturing it in 1828 to ensure the definitive disappearance of its power. A number of inscriptions probably suffered the same fate as other signs of Lao power at this time, including the chronicles produced in the capital: they were consigned to destruction. At least one example of a large inscribed stele was transported by the victorious troops to the right bank, that of Vat Ho Phra Kaeo.

The brutal modification of historical context is sometimes perceptible only in the gaps created by the sudden absence of certain types of sources in existing documentation. The existence of small peripheral inscriptions highlights the absence of large inscriptions. In the same way, numerous and widely distributed inscriptions from the reigns of Setthathirat in the middle of the 16th century and No Müang at the end of the same century illuminate the difficulties or differing characters of intermediary and later reigns, such as that of Suriyavongsa in the second half of the 17th century.

The object

One cannot forget in the external criticism of the stele inscriptions of the Lan Na and the Lan Xang the questions relating to their very support. These offer insights that allow for a much more accurate approach to the contexts in which the writings were set. One need only visit the museums in Chiang Saen, Phayao, and Lamphun to realize the quality of execution achieved for some of these documents.

A detailed and exhaustive comparative analysis of the forms of all steles found to date would certainly be profitable. This would permit identification of the production sites and hence establish provenance of documents that have been displaced. It would also facilitate study of the influence between different workshops and the transmission networks of certain techniques. This research would ideally consider aspects of physical geography to identify regions where stele materials were extracted. Mineralogical analysis of Cambodian inscriptions already demonstrates the validity of this type of investigation. It could be that stones used by the Tai for engraving, which were works of real specialists, were much travelled before an inscription was drafted.

The stele itself was certainly a highly valued manufactured product. The region of Phayao might have occupied a particular place in the production of stone objects. The greatest number of steles has been found in this province. They are distinguished generally by their size, variety of form, and quality. This is also the location where most of the oldest examples of Tai inscriptions were produced. It features a specific type of production: Buddha images in stone, concurrent in this important *müang* with Buddha images in bronze.

In Phayao, as in Phrae and Nan where very old epigraphic remains were found, the influence from Sukhothai was probably decisive. There is a correspondence between important four-sided steles found in this kingdom and several examples recovered in Phayao. The ancient Mon city of Haripunchai also presented models of engraved steles, and their

massive stature undoubtedly impressed Tai artisans greatly, particularly in the region of Chiang Mai. However, the production of these Mon inscriptions seems to have been limited to a short period at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries and an interruption of the practice for nearly two centuries may well have occurred.

The methods of production of lapidary documents in Lan Xang appear to have been quite different. Qualitatively speaking, the execution of the majority of inscribed steles in the Lao kingdom is significantly inferior to that of steles of the northern Tai kingdom. They differ in size, regularity of form, and preparation of the stone, rendering the final stage of engraving much more difficult. Ultimately, the result often appears untidy, be it the support or the inscription. We do have about 20 or so examples where the work of shaping the stone was carried out with the clearest concern to produce a beautiful object, but various clues show us that these were not necessarily made by the expected craftmen, i.e. Lao sculptors. In several cases, Lan Xang engravers reused pre-existing supports, sculpted several centuries before by artisans of a different culture. These include the *sema* of the Mon, a characteristic object that spread though most of the middle valley of the Mekong during the second half of the first millennium. This type of ritual marker, often ornamented with a stylized image of a *stupa*, has been found in great numbers on the Vientiane plain and the area on the opposite bank of the river.[20] Lao lapidaries needed only to fully or partially slice off the Mon bas-reliefs to engrave text on the liberated surface. Some inscribed steles in Lan Xang were produced rapidly in this way, without effective technical preparation of the stone, the mastery of which seemed to have eluded the Lao sculptors (who had proven skill in working bronze).

During the second half of the 16th century, production of inscriptions in Lan Xang probably benefited from the arrival in the kingdom of stone sculptors and engravers escaping from Lan Na. The most beautiful realization of steles was concentrated during the reigns of Setthathirat and his immediate successors. Northern Thai influence is found in

both rhetorical and written styles of that period. These stone engraving specialists were perhaps the *phan nangsü*, who are frequently referenced in Lan Na inscriptions. Another characteristic that proves the exceptional influence of Lan Na traditions on those of Lan Xang is a very rich calendric system, mixing text and graphic data (using a horoscopic disk), based on complex calculations requiring consultation with specialists.[21] Lao calendric data appears to be specific because, given the more limited geographic distribution of the inscriptions, it refers to a single system of monthly calculations instead of the three systems in use at the time in Lan Na. This system, identical to that of Sukhothai, demonstrates the ancient influence of this kingdom.

The text

Comparison of the Lan Xang and Lan Na epigraphic corpora through the prism of internal critique, that is to say analysis of texts, reveals the greatest number of results. Only a few observations are presented, as research on these corpora is still in the initial stage.

In general, the principal purpose of the large majority of Lan Na and Lan Xang stele inscriptions seems identical: to register (more than to commemorate) gifts to newly created or ancient sanctuary of property, human resources, or products. The religious community thus irrevocably received rights held in principle by the sovereign. Rhetoric used in stele inscriptions refers most often to religious acts of faith. Such motivation is also found in other types of inscriptions, notably those inscribed on Buddha images. In this last case, the donor formulates aspirations with fervor and sincerity — anticipating great recompense for the meritorious value of the offering — whereas in the first case the discourse conforms to a rigid and conventional model, largely masking individual intention with collective action. The primary motivation for making an offering to a sanctuary is thus neither eschatological nor personal (even if the

merit of the action is supposed to benefit the sovereign or one of his relatives). The offering caters more to civil than religious preoccupations. The lay character of the formulation is primary, other than in a few exceptions, and the content of the inscription is marked above all by material considerations. The use of the *Fak kham* script might prove that the objectives go beyond the strictly religious world and are expressed through secular practice linked to the functioning of society. The act registered and preserved by the inscription brings the religious community guaranteed methods of subsistence, ensuring important resources for rapid expansion of influence. From this mechanism, royal power asserts its authority in distant lands. The presence of the sovereign is inscribed in the territory through the implantation of a powerful network of monasteries. This is more effective in relaying and transmitting central policy than representatives, who belong to a fragile apparatus vulnerable to events.

Stone inscriptions can thus be assimilated into actual administrative acts. This function is signified by the term "*ājñā*" (power, by extension decree), which is associated with the royal person. It often appeared on the steles of Lan Na (as well as *rāja ongkān*) and was later used in a quasi-systematic manner in the most highly regarded Lan Xang inscriptions. In this setting, it indicates, from the first lines, a superior and inviolable order. Given the stereotypical character that Lao steles' formulation quickly acquired, they seem less ambiguous than the steles of Northern-Thailand, where royal authority is not expressed with as much weight. However, one may wonder about the type of reality that these differences in rhetoric really covered. If the Lan Na inscriptions give the impression that royal intervention was sometimes remote, did it nevertheless have less impact than in the Lan Xang, where the conventional and rigid wording of the inscriptions tends to present it as omnipresent and omnipotent? This is only one aspect of the problem, for the distinction in style between the northern Thai inscriptions and the Lao inscriptions is in fact much more important. The former favor narrative style and freedom

of expression that at times lead to difficulties in interpretation. Over more than 150 years, they have generated a mass of contextualized information that often transcends the local level. An impression of life and movement emerges, endowing each text with a unique character. Lao inscriptions followed this tendency early on, with a few examples dating from the reigns of Phothisarat and Setthathirat. However, they conformed quickly to a fixed model with information limited to measures, values, and names of individuals. This uniformity and simplification may correspond to a sclerosis in practice, as though it never truly acclimatized to Lan Xang. Lao royal charters engraved in stone intended for sanctuaries disappeared in the middle of the 17th century. Unlike Lan Na, no external upheaval can explain this phenomenon.

The spatial distribution of Lan Na stele inscriptions proves an equilibrium that is confirmed by the characteristics of their content; the quality of discourse is almost universal, proving homogeneity of cultural practice and social models over a vast territory. This is not the case for the inscriptions of Lan Xang, which are limited to a small part of the territory and show differences in quality of content, suggesting significant differences in written practice, social structure, and local representation of power.

The narrative and descriptive styles used in Lan Na inscriptions permit a vibrant approach to the context in which these documents were produced. The number of references made to various personages of differing positions and titles shows, more than in the chronicles, a particularly developed social organization. The indexation effected by Hans Penth and his team furnished highly enriched research material, with some 5,260 references to names and positions registered based on 270 inscriptions (comprising supports other than steles and going beyond the chronological confines of the Golden Age of Lan Na). Although this enormous quantity of references remains to be analyzed, most refer to individuals in a hierarchical and highly organized system, each relaying policy from a centralized authority according to their competency

and talent. Lao inscriptions of the 16th century are a pale reflection of this system, although its foundation was inherent to the Tai mode of organization. They make reference to a few important lords, as do the chronicles, but they never present a veritable corps of agents acting on royal authority and intermediaries appointed to effect implementation, as in the epigraphic corpus of Lan Na. It appears that Lan Xang lacked the rich and complex institutional apparatus developed by its powerful neighbor, perhaps because the prerequisites for its existence were never consolidated.

It would be interesting to evaluate the true role of donations and the granting of privileges through royal prerogative, as well as their economic consequences. It is highly unlikely that the sovereign's estate suffered from the abandonment of land. This may not have been the same for seigniorial benefits, given the insistence in the inscriptions on preventing misappropriation of royal donations for the profit of local powers.

The contextual data of donations made to sanctuaries implies a great deal about aspects of the economic situation in the two kingdoms, notably production capacity, type and value of crops, and workforce. A comparison of the corpora of Lan Na and Lan Xang offers elements to distinguish the two kingdoms on the important questions of subsistence and, in particular, the role of riziculture. Lan Xang never attained levels of production on the banks of the Mekong comparable to those that geographic advantages and human organization made possible on the great plains around Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. Questions about manufacturing and commerce cannot be answered as precisely. However, inscriptions show that a monetary economy existed in both Lan Na and Lan Xang, at least in rudimentary form. The numerical values indicated by scribes should, however, be approached with caution, in particular any reaching several thousand units.

The epigraphic corpora of Lan Na and Lan Xang clarify the position occupied by religious communities in Tai local societies and the ways their subsistence and position were guaranteed. Placing aside the

smaller monastic grid in the Lao milieu, there were no flagrant material differences between the temples of Lan Na and Lan Xang, despite the fact that the latter were conceived according to a less complex format. However, inscriptions of the northern Tai kingdom raise questions about ritual practice absent from the inscriptions along the Mekong. The Lao kingdom undoubtedly received echoes of divergences that led the Sangha of Lan Na to separate into distinct *nikāya*. Currently available sources do not show a similar situation in Lan Xang, except epigraphic data that attests to Phothisarat's determination to purify religion in a temple in Luang Prabang and in Vientiane monasteries.[22] In general, the Lao religious community was late in receiving, in an incomplete process, the scholastic traditions that gave northern Tai Buddhism its great reputation. Lan Na inscriptions are believed to contain information on this subject that allows re-contextualization of the general situation. This inquiry should counter-balance the religious chronicles of Lan Na that have caused bias in the perception of the history of different Buddhist communities. The more reformist movements have not been confirmed to have had the impact on the entire kingdom that certain texts suggest. Generally, the inscriptions show homogeneity in practice, except perhaps during the short period at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. Moreover, the duration of the controversies, which must have agitated the clergy, is uncertain.

Conclusion

The epigraphic corpora of Lan Na and Lan Xang represent for the historical knowledge of these kingdoms an exceptional documentary potential. From the point of view of factual history, which has largely prevailed until today, they offer the extraordinary possibility of confirming general chronology exposed by local historiographical traditions, in particular in Chiang Mai, Luang Prabang, and Vientiane. They also

complement the chronicles by providing precise data which, by their number and their geographical and chronological distribution, make it possible to approach the past economic and social contexts of these kingdoms. Although not all periods can be treated in the same way, it is in any case possible for certain eras, such as the forty years covering the reigns of Phra Yot Chiang Rai and Phra Müang Kaeo, at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, to gather sufficient information to engage in a macroscopic approach and to propose a vivid image of Tai society in some of its aspects. There is also a certain interest in studying each of the two corpora in the mirror of the other: their similarities, as well as the differences that they highlight, contribute to refining in an important way our vision of the political, economic and cultural balances that have characterized the different phases of the regional history of the Tai-Lao peoples.

Appendix

Inscription of Vat Visun (Luang Prabang), 16th century

This inscription was discovered at Vat Visun in Luang Prabang by Auguste Pavie on February 21, 1887. It is inscribed on a 38 cm high schist plate.

The text is one of the first Lao royal ordinances. It deals with part of the donations that, according to handwritten chronicles, were made to the statue of Phra Bang when it was installed in Vat Visun during the first quarter of the 16th century. However, the writing is very similar to a type of the *Fak kham* script used in the Lan Na territory during the second half of the same century.

Figure 1 (left to right)**:**
Rubbing of the complete inscription. (Mission Pavie, 1898)
Rubbing of the remaining part of the inscription at the beginning of the 20th century. (EFEO)
Picture of the remaining part of the inscription at the Museum of History in Hanoi. (Lorrillard)

Transcription in Thaï script of the original text:	**Transcription in modern Lao script and language:**	**Translation:**
1. [. . .]มืร[ว]ายยียามตู[ด . . .]	1. -ມື້ຣ(ວ)າຍຍີຍາມຕູ(ດ)-	1. . . . the day *raway yi*, the watch of (tut . . .)
2. [ษุ]ภมัสตุ พรราชอาจญาสมเด้จ	2. [ສຸ]ພະມັດສະຕຸ ພຣະຣາຊອາດຍາສົມເດັດ	2. May there be happiness! The royal ordinance of His
3. [บํรมบํ]พิต พร่เป้นเจ้าตนเป้นพร่	3. [ບໍຣະມະບໍ]ພິດ ພຣະເປັນເຈົ້າຕົນເປັນພຣະ	3. Supreme, Pure and Sovereign Majesty,
4. [ปะสิ]ทิใหทาน เมิองผาน้อยเป้นอุ	4. [ປະສິ]ດທິໃຫ້ທານເມີອງຜານ້ອຍເປັນອຸ-	4. blessing the gift of Müang Pha Nòt for the
5. [ปะกา]น แกพร่บางเจ้า ทังบา	5. [ປະກາ]ນແກ່ພຣະບາງເຈົ້າ ທັງບ້າ-	5. service of the Phra Bang Chao, with Ban
6. [น. . .] บานนอดหาดคานบานโพน	6. [ນX] ບ້ານນອດຫາດຄານ ບ້ານໂພນ	6. (), Ban Not Hat Khan, Ban Phon
7. [ทอ]งแล บานปุนผาคาวแล	7. [ທອ]ງແລ ບ້ານປູນຜາຄາວ ແລ	7. (Tho)ng, Ban Pun Pha Khrao and
8. [บา]นถินคำแดง หลางแดนดิ	8. [ບ້າ]ນຖິ່ນຄຳແດງ ຫລ້າງແດນດິ-	8. (Ba)n Thin Kham Daeng. The lands,
9. [น]แล งวดงาอากอนเทาใด	9. [ນ]ແລ ງວດງາອາກອນເທົ່າໃດ	9. the taxes and the contributions of all kinds,
10. [ขา]ไพก่ดี ใหเวนใวกับ วิชุ	10. [ຂ້າ]ໄພ່ກໍ່ດີ ໃຫ້ເວນໄວ້ກັບວິຊຸ-	10. as well as the servants, are to be given to the Viju-
11. [ระอาราม] . . .	11. [ນອາຣາມ] . . .	11. (ra-āram) . . .

Endnote: The Inscriptions of the Lan Na and Lan Xang Kingdoms

1. A first French version of this contribution was published under the title "Les inscriptions sur stèle du Lān Nā et du Lān Xāng (XVe–XVIIe siècles) — Pour une approche nouvelle des royaumes t'ai septentrionaux", in *Péninsule* 74 (2017–1), 2017, pp. 5–30.

2. See the complete list in the References.

3. The two volumes (each containing a book text and a book plates) of the Lan Na Inscriptions (จารึกล้านนา), 1992 and 2008, as well as the *Inscriptional History of Phayao* (ประชุมจารึกเมืองพะเยา), 1995, bring together a large number of specific inscriptions from northern Thailand. Such collections as the eight volumes of *Corpus of Inscriptions* (ประชุมศิลาจารึก) and the fifth volume of *Inscriptions of Thailand* (จารึกในประเทศไทย), 1986, as well as such journals as *Silapakorn*, offer more scattered data. In his catalog (vol. 2) of *Northern Thai Stone Inscriptions*, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2012, Marek Buchmann provides a valuable research tool by specifying the bibliographical indications of 239 lapidary inscriptions. His glossary (vol. 1, 2011) and his grammar (vol. 3, 2015), based on a large selection of these sources, are also very useful. For inscriptions on Buddha of Lan Na, refer to A.B. Griswold (1957) and to H. Penth (1976).

4. *Contribution à la connaissance de la civilisation laotienne d'après l'épigraphie du royaume de Vientiane* (*xve–xixe siècles*), PhD dissertation, EPHE, Paris, 1976.

5. '*Isan*' *inscriptions from the Thai-Lao period: Epigraphic and Historical Studies about Isan*, Bangkok, Ramkhamhaeng University, 1987.

ธวัช ปุณโณหก, *ศิลาจารึกอีสานสมัยไทย-ลาว: ศึกษาทางด้านอักขรวิทยาและประวัติศาสตร์อีสาน*.

6. For results specific to the epigraphical sources of these investigations: cf. M. Lorrillard, "Research on the Inscriptions in Laos: Current Situation and Perspectives." In: Perret, D. ed., *Writing fo Eternity: A Survey of Epigraphy in Southeast Asia*, Études thématique n°30, EFEO, Paris, 2018, pp. 87–107. The EFEO center in Vientiane is currently preparing an exhaustive edition of these texts, with a first volume entitled *Recueil des inscriptions sur stèle du royaume lao du Lan Xang*. For an overview of the remains and materials found in Lao PDR: M. Lorrillard, "Pour une géographie historique du bouddhisme au Laos." In: Goudineau, Y. & Lorrillard, M. eds., *Recherches nouvelles sur le Laos*, Études thématiques n°18, EFEO, Vientiane–Paris, 2008, pp. 113–81.

7. An excellent analysis of the data provided by northern Thai inscriptions from an important economic perspective: Penth, H., "On Rice and Rice Fields in Old Lan Na — Texts, Translations, Interpretations." In: *JSS* 91, 2003, pp. 90–188. For a panorama of the most important Lao inscriptions of the 16th century: cf. Lorrillard, M., "Les inscriptions du That Luang de Vientiane: données nouvelles sur l'histoire d'un *stūpa* lao." In: *BEFEO* 90–91, 2003, pp. 289–348.

8. *Bulletin of the Archives of Lan Na Inscriptions* (5 vols.), Chiang Mai University, 1982–1993; *Index to Lan Na Inscriptions — Part 1: Persons and Titles*, Chiang Mai University, 2006.

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9. *Op. cit*.

10. "Population and state in Lan Na prior to the mid-sixteenth century." In: *JSS* 93, 2005, pp. 1–68; *Bevölkerung und Staat in Lan Na — Ein Beitrag zur Bevölkerungsgeschichte Südostasiens*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2004.

11. The origin of the Tai civil script remains problematic, especially the Sukhothai model, which seems to precede the *fak kham* model of the Lan Na from a paleographic point of view. Refer to the hypotheses of H. Penth (1986, 1996). With regard to the Tham religious script, the official thesis that it derives directly from the Mon script employed in Haripuñjaya (Lamphun) at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries seems dubious. This script was used first for the notation of the pâli language on palm-leaf manuscripts, which spread in the north of Thailand from the beginning of the 14th century at the latest. Accordingly, there is a good chance that this writing comes from Burma, probably the Mon coastal regions, and was assimilated by the Lan Na, and possibly other T'ai, along with the content of the texts.

12. Lorrillard, M., "Écriture et histoire: le cas du Laos." In: *Aséanie* n°22, 2008, pp. 63–84.

13. These are LB.09 and LB.27 (adopting M. Buchmann's inventory system), but probably also BY.44, BY.47 and BY.52, usually rejuvenated in a cycle of 60 years.

14. See M. Ferlus, "L'inscription rupestre de Nang An (Louang Phrabang)." In: *La Thaïlande des débuts de son histoire jusqu'au xve siècle*, Actes du premier symposium franco-thai (juillet 1988), Bangkok, 1995, pp. 110–14. Two problematic inscriptions from the province of Khammuan (central Laos) with chronological data that is undoubtedly indicated retrospectively also need to be reconsidered. The first comes from Ban Xieng Vang Tai, not far from the mouth of Se Bang Fai river, and bears the date December 8, 1386. The second is erected in front of That Sikhot, a few kilometers south of Tha Khaek, and indicates April 17, 1494. Both have been engraved on Khmer period materials that have therefore been reused.

15. Lorrillard, M., "Insights on the Diffusion of Lao Buddhism." In: Lagirarde, F. & Koanathakool, P.C., eds., *Buddhist Legacies in Mainland Southeast Asia*, Études thématiques, n°19, 2006, pp. 139–48.

16. The chronicles themselves are very lacunary for this time. However, other evidence indicates that, unlike in previous periods, Lan Xang enjoyed a certain prosperity under Suriyavongsa's reign, which was still favored by the political unity of the kingdom and its territorial integrity.

17. This figure is taken from our own inventory, which includes Lao inscriptions from Laos and from northeastern Thailand.

18. Cœdès, G., "Documents sur l'histoire politique et religieuse du Laos occidental." In: *BEFEO* t. XXV–1, 1925, pp. 1–201; Jayawickrama, N.A. (trad.), *The Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror*, London, Pali Text Society, 1978.

19. Note that the very long and eventful reign of Tilokarat raises the most questions: the number of inscriptions is abnormally low compared to the reigns of his two successors and a geographical imbalance emerged. Political reasons may not be the only ones involved. Religious issues and distinctions between the sects may also have factored.

20. Lorrillard, M., "La plaine de Vientiane au tournant du second millénaire: données nouvelles sur l'expansion des espaces khmer et môn anciens au Laos (II)." In: *BEFEO* 100 (daté 2014), EFEO, Paris, 2016, pp. 38–107; "Vientiane et le Mékong: situation de la ville dans l'espace régional et la longue durée." In: Clément-Charpentier, S. & al., eds., *Vientiane, architectures d'une capitale — Traces formes, structures, projets*, Les cahiers de l'Iprauss, éd. Recherches, Paris, 2010, pp. 33–50.

21. Cf. Eade, J.C., *The Thai Historical Record: A Computer Analysis*, Toyo Bunko, Tokyo, 1996.

22. Unpublished inscription of Vat Savanthevalok or Vat Sangkhalok, Luang Prabang, 1527. (The chronicles echo the will of the king, apparently dictated by an important religious dignitary.) Vat Daen Müang's inscription no. 2, Phon Phixay, 1535 (see Thawat, *op. cit*. pp. 236–40).

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